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NSC BRIEFING

5 April 1955

THE ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE

- I. The Asian-African conference which is being sponsored by the five Colombo powers (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and Indonesia) will convene in Bandung, Indonesia, on 18 April.
 - A. In all, twenty-nine countries, including Communist China and North Vietnam and containing more than a half of the world's population, will be represented. The only country invited that did not accept was the Central African Federation.
 - B. In making up the invitation list, the sponsors adopted no clear-cut qualifications. Consequently, the invitees are--even in Nehru's view--"an odd assortment." The nearest thing to a common denominator we can find is the experience of practically all participants of being subjected to Western imperialism in one form or another within the past hundred years.
 - C. In this connection, Burmese Premier Nu has been quoted as saying that the conference would not be "anti-West, but if we discuss colonialism we may have some disparaging remarks about colonial powers and those are mostly Western powers." Nehru's recent outburst against the West in the Indian parliament illustrates the

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emotionalism of Nationalist Asian leaders which might erupt at Bandung, although Nehru himself may well have cooled off by then and be more circumspect in "mixed company."

D. In view of all this, it is interesting to note that English has been adopted as the official language of the conference.

II. Although the purposes of the Conference were announced in Dec. '54, no agenda has yet been adopted. In fact, there is a good deal of disagreement among the sponsors in their efforts to draw up a provisional one.

A. India is pressing for consideration of the following topics:

1. Promotion of world peace and co-operation--coexistence.
2. Progress in Indochina.
3. Racial discrimination and racial problems.
4. Problem of dependent people.
5. Nuclear energy, in war and peace.
6. Programs of economic development and co-operation in Asian-African region.
7. Cultural co-operation.
8. Desirability of holding cultural festivals in participating countries on appropriate occasions.

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- B. The Indians can count on the support of the neutralist Burmese and Indonesians for an agenda along these lines. Ceylon and Pakistan, however, have different ideas.
1. Ceylong, for instance, wants to discuss such topics as international communism and regional defense, which do not appeal in the least to the neutralists.
 2. For its part, Pakistan visualizes itself as the leader of the pro-Western countries and Premier Ali has expressed interest in introducing items that will counter the Indian proposals.

C. There are indications that the agenda problem is being resolved by neutralist insistence that topics conform to the announced purposes of the conference, which strongly reflect the Indian viewpoint.

D. Meanwhile, Burmese Premier U Nu has been visiting New Delhi where he has discussed the conference with Nehru.

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Nu and Nehru have agreed that, at Bandung, political questions would be more important than cultural and economic ones.

1. There is no doubt that the neutrals hope to win more adherents to the so-called "five principles" of coexistence.

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2. There are also indications that they plan to bring up such matters as (a) a ban on atomic weapons tests, (b) the undesirability of regional defense agreements--particularly the Manila pact, (c) the merits of the Geneva pact and (d) possible solutions of the Formosa problem.
3. The introduction of any one of these subjects would provide bitter debate and belie pious statements of neutralist officials that everything would be done to avoid controversy.

III. In any event, the Communists are obviously aware of the opportunities presented by the airing of such topics and have been making careful preparations to take full advantage of them.

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- A. The fact [REDACTED] that the Communists have refrained from officially submitting items for the agenda strongly suggests their confidence that the topics selected by the neutralists will provide ample opportunity to express the Communist view.
- B. The two Communist participants are sending strong delegations.
 1. Communist China will be represented by 24 official delegates, under the leadership of Premier Chou En-lai.

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2. The Viet Minh reportedly is sending a 15-man group under the leadership of either Ho Chi Minh or the Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, Pham Van Dong, who played a prominent role as leader of the Viet Minh delegation at Geneva.
- C. Another measure of Communist expectations is the large number of newsmen they will have at Bandung. Altogether, there will be 12 TASS men, 2 representatives, of the London Daily Worker and 20-30 Chinese reporters.
1. The Chinese are reported to have requested the Indonesians for facilities to file 10,000 words a day.
- D. Meanwhile, Peiping has launched a large-scale propaganda campaign concerning the conference. The main themes of this propaganda have been Asian solidarity, co-existence and US malevolence.
- E. The Communists also have an opportunity for a "dry run" at the "Asian Conference for the Relaxation of International Tensions" which opened yesterday in New Delhi. This meeting is sponsored by the Communist-front All-Indian Peace Council and is attended by nearly a score of Asian and African countries, as well as the USSR.

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1. Although the "delegations" at New Delhi are "unofficial" leftist groups, most will be "representing" countries which are sending official governmental delegations to Bandung.
2. Significantly, the agenda of the New Delhi conference covers much the same ground as will probably be examined at Bandung.

F. Burmese Premier Nu has provided the Communists with an excellent opportunity to do some pre-conference lobbying by inviting both Chou and Ho Chi Minh to visit Rangoon a few days before the conference.

1. Nehru, travelling in company with the entire Egyptian and Afghan delegations, is expected in Rangoon on 15 April.
2. Nu has proposed that all six groups proceed to Bandung together.
3. The latest word from the Burmese embassy in Peiping suggests that Chou will accept.

IV. Despite these Communist advantages, the outlook for the West is not all bad. Twenty-one of the twenty-nine participants are strongly anti-Communist. Of these, twelve are closely linked to the West.

A. Moreover, the pro-Western countries will be represented by such able and eloquent spokesmen as Carlos Romulo of the Philippines, Mohamad Ali of Pakistan, Prince Wan of Thailand, Jamali of Iraq, and probably Charles Malik of Lebanon.

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- B. Another possibility favorable to the West is the prospect for development of Sino-Indian rivalry at Bandung. Despite Nehru's recent attack on the West, it is not believed that he would welcome a Chinese Communist effort to steal the show.
1. Nehru probably can be expected to resist any effort by Peiping to dominate the conference.

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